

# HILL 100

## *Outline for an Unwritten Novel*

*Wyndham Lewis*

**S**TORY WOULD OPEN in early days of French colonization of Canada. *Hill 100* would be situated in goldmining area of Northern Ontario (border of Quebec, or inside latter province). Story would end upon same hill several centuries hence. Hill would then be marked Hill 100 upon Ordnance maps of U.S. Army. In war proceeding at that time, American Army would be holding Hill 100 (or Hill 1000?). There would be an attack by hostile planes, and hill would be blown up, leaving crater as large as base of hill. Inside crater, inside pit blasted out, would be remains of auriferous rock formations.

**C**HAPTER I would reveal Fr.-Canadian, Castou, sitting with Indian at base of hill, covered with bush, gazing into stream. Night is falling. It is July — it is getting chilly. Castou shakes himself. He regards cold stream with dislike. He dislikes Canada — abominates its wilderness — loathes its Indians. However, he has made his bed, he must lie in it. He is a trapper. He is very far from the hamlet in Calvados from which he came some years before. There is no turning back — much as he regrets the gentle slopes of the Norman Hills, the quays of Rouen, where he had worked as a longshoreman, and so become acquainted with the immigrant ships.

He stands up. The Indian stands up. They communicate with each other in a mixture of French and Dogrib. They walk back slowly to the Dogrib village.

“Fait f’oid,” grunts Dogrib.

“T’as raison, Mitouti,” Castou answers (“Mitouti” means “Wolf’s Ear”. Mi-

touti has very pointed ears, which seem always pricked, as if listening for hostile noises. "Quel sale *kapac*, nom de nom!"

Mitouti shrugs. He doesn't think much of it either. The Dogribs would prefer to live farther south, but the Iroquois wouldn't let them, so they have to stop where they are. They have tried once or twice: but their braves are quite second class — and get no better, since as a tribe they are distinctly undernourished whereas the Iroquois get much more to eat. They always let them down, lose a lot dead and scalped. So here they stop, in their grim and dirty little village.

Castou and Mitouti enter the village, which is very filthy. Castou sticks his chest out and blows a little through his red Norse moustache. He is dressed à l'Indien. The Indians are squatting in the mouths of their ill-smelling tents — at least the braves are (if these diminutive and rather cowardly males can be so described). Mitouti is their Chief. They watch him pass with a proper impassibility, but with as near to sullenness as a piece of wood can get. For he has beaten up most of them once or twice, being much stronger and braver than any of them. Mitouti is not very brave, but he has a very bad temper, and a streak of Iroquois blood.

They go to Mitouti's wigwam. Mimatauket, his wife, is cooking a rabbit, and his daughter, the lovely Kakapo, is throwing on the wood. For a Dogrib, Kakapo is not bad, although unspeakably dirty. She is seventeen, and two thick inkblack plaits of hair hang over her shoulders like shining black sausages, decorated with red and green threads of dyed goatwool. She stands up as they approach and hurries inside the tent, from the door of which she ogles Castou.

The French trapper swaggers up to Kakapo, and thrusts his arm around her untidy waist.

"Ah ah ma belle! Embrasse donc ton petit Castou!" he exclaims, thrusting out his moustachioed lips.

A raucous titter comes from the copper-blue lips of Kakapo. These mouth-rubbing habits of the Paleface amuse Kakapo. They rub lips. The big red moustache of the trapper blankets Kakapo's mouth: her chin rests in his beard. Mitouti takes his pipe out of the tent, and squatting down, lights up. Mimatauket twirls the rabbit with a dark forefinger.

Such, more or less, would be the first scene. The second scene (the 2nd chapter?) would describe Castou, the trapper, at work. He would be sitting in a canoe in a small lake, just before dawn. The caribou would come down to the water's edge. Castou would shoot it. The Indians would take care of the dead caribou and Castou would then go the round of his traps.

**T**HE NEXT SCENE (chapter 3?) would show Castou back in one of the French settlements, married to Kakapo — who would have grown to look rather like Mimatauket. They would, it would be found, have three sons and a daughter — Pierre, Jules, Denis, and Antoinette. The latter would be very swarthy and pretty: the three sons still on the Indian side — though Pierre would have a copper-red moustache and a bit of a beard. All of course would be Catholics; Kakapo less dirty and very devout.

These three scenes would represent the establishment and beginnings of the present day Fr.-Canadian family of Castou. (Castou would in reality bear the name of Gaston Laverrière: but, as always, describe himself as “Castou”, and as his patronymic would be too difficult for him to attempt any way to communicate, as Castou he would be known, and his family would become that of Castou. His daughter thus would be Mademoiselle Antoinette Castou, not Antoinette Laverrière.

**T**HE NEXT SCENE (chapter 4?) would show a “Tory” family, horrified by the cold of the Maritimes, and especially at the unbelievable inclemency of . . . . in Nova Scotia, to which they had indignantly retired, after their fellow citizens in Philadelphia had parted company with the British Crown and declared themselves “independent” — it would show this greatly-tried and shivering family setting out to find a warmer place, farther inland.

They press on, by road and river, in a most unpioneerlike determination to find a soft spot, or at least one comfortably warm, until they reach what then was called Upper Canada. That would be circa 1815, and the region would be that lying west of Kingston, Ontario. Port Grace, they would call it; because, being on the St. Lawrence, at the mouth of a muddy little river, it could be called a port, and “Grace” meant that they were duly grateful to the Lord for having delivered them from the unmentionable rigours of what the French so unsuitably named Arcady (being tougher, obviously, than the Anglosaxons from the land of Penn): and for having so graciously guided them to a relatively warm spot — at least as un-cold as anything could be in these frozen regions, which was all that was left of America by those disgusting radicals, who set their face against Royalty and Quality, and, in insolent rebellion, had, with that odious Washington at their head, set themselves up as a State.

The next scene (chapter 5?) would show a certain Joseph Biggs, operating a rather prosperous store in Port Grace — reputed to be about the richest man in town, and [a] keen politician. This is about 1870. Joseph Biggs looks across the St. Lawrence at the Yankees, and is pretty glad to be a Canadian, when he thinks of some of the ungodly things that go on in the land of the Almighty Dollar. Joseph Biggs is a pillar of the Methodist Church, and the Church is a pillar of his business. He had a son, Joseph Jnr., who is ten years old. Next we should move to the heart of the Gay Nineties: Joseph Biggs Jnr. has married a charming girl of “French extraction” — Huguenot, of course — named Antoinette Castou. The Castous turned up in Port Grace way back in the Eighteen Twenties, moving in from Montreal, I guess. (Lots of Huguenots in Ontario, with rather French names, came originally from Montreal.) These Castous had a corn-chandler’s and [were] pretty smart people.

The father of Antoinette was a lawyer, doing a big business in Kingston and Toronto. He was a pretty smart man. This was 1895, and Joseph Biggs Jnr. and Antoinette had a boy of ten, who was called Richard Russlyn Biggs. And Dick Biggs became a very smart man indeed. By 1910 he was, of course, 25 years old. He had demonstrated his smartness already in several notable instances. Dick Biggs was in Toronto (or “Toronter” as it is called by Hoi Polloi). More than one pretty smart man in the provincial capital had gone bugeyed as he had watched Dick Biggs at work, and predicted he would go far. He was ostensibly interested in agricultural machinery, being an agent for companies in the States (who attempted to pass their tractors and peashelling machines through the tariff wall, behind which Canadians live as isolated as the Tibetans, or more so; or did until the coming of the Moving Picture and Radio. They were cut off by the Atlantic Ocean from Great Britain — to whom they were supposed to belong, politically, and because of whom they had come to this sunny retreat to escape from the defilement of the disloyal Yankees; they were cut off from Asia by the Pacific; they were cut off from the United States by their Tariff Wall: and as to the north, there was the North Pole — so no one could disturb their seclusion from *that* direction. Yes, the Canadian was certainly the most isolated people on earth, except for the Eskimo.)

But Dick Biggs was not going to spend all his life as a salesman and agent for farm-implements; although that opening up of the Buffalo lands and the amazing operations of Sifton when the West was provided with a huge labouring population overnight had made agricultural machinery a boom-line. No, one day Dick Biggs began prospecting — not himself of course, he was too smart for

that, but paying other people to, buying up claims, financing and organizing small companies. By 1940 Dick Biggs is one of the hundred mining millionaires of the great gold and nickel city of Toronto. He was one of the biggest gold-magnates in the world; since Canada is the second largest gold-producing country, and he was the greatest of all the gold-kings of Canada.

Now Mr. and Mrs. Dick Biggs had a solitary child, a son, at present 24 years old, named Alistair. Alistair had been in the Bahamas, and there he had met an American girl, called Claire Heming, whom he is about to marry. She has come to the Biggs home at Mimico to meet her future father and mother-in-law. Claire had only enough money to get her to the Bahamas and back to New York, and she was pretty surprised when she landed a gold mine.

Alistair does not look as if he was in fact a gold mine. He was a small, pallid, rather frightened little creature. Yes, this mountain — this mountain of gold — had brought forth, at last, a mouse.

As Claire goes to bed the first night in the Biggs place — in a vast and very gloomy Tudor apartment, but the luxury so great that the bed almost whispered a sigh for you as you sank into it, and the servants almost arrived by thought-transference before you had touched the button to summon them — when Claire contrasted the shrinking little animal she had just left in the passage outside, and all this weighty wood, and glittering gold and aluminum and ponderous drapes, she could not believe that they really had *all that* to do with each other. But had she been able at that moment to transfer herself to the mines at Timmins she would have found it even more difficult to see how so portentous an organism could possess so *minute* a parasite.

**A**T SOME POINT — for the above sketch of the background build-up does not come necessarily in that order — there will be about 100 pages dealing with the miner's life at Timmins (or wherever it is the mines are to be situated, and whatever the mines are called). Then there will be 100 pages dealing with the social structure of the city of Toronto, which is in fact a vast mining camp. It is, at least, a great city of over one million inhabitants, swollen to this great size because of the presence in Ontario of the great gold and nickel mines, and of the presence of all the mining magnates and their families in or near it, and of all the banks and commercial institutions in the service mainly of the great mines. Thus when the mines are booming, the Ontario stock-exchange is a bull

market, it blooms and flourishes, and Montreal declines. It is vice-versa, too, of course.

Now the general plan of the book is to show first the two European races, the French and the Anglosaxon, in their early colonizing stage. We start with the French trapper, who, like the majority of the early French settlers, married an Indian woman. There are not many French-Canadian families engaged in agriculture along the St. Lawrence who are not partly Indian. Quite half the French Canadians in such a city as Montreal — and *all* the French Canadians in Quebec — are perfectly visibly possessed of Indian blood. Well, it will be our purpose to show this conditioning of the French-Canadian stock in operation. There will be patriarchal scenes (perhaps the one described by Pierrette of the arresting of the grandchildren, to the number of 100 at Easter, kneeling outside the front door, being blessed by the *grandpère* before they enter). Scenes indicating the early catholic (jesuit) construction for a powerful isolated theocratic state. Then the very different character of the Anglosaxon settlement will be described or indicated.

Having described this primitive world, and shown the roots of the present inhabitants, the present day world of the gold mining town is shown — the bush town — and shown how it is very little less primitive. The life of the gold mine — the Polish Ukrainian workmen living in shacks with 50 bunks apiece etc. etc. etc. Further the perpetual friction between the French and Ang. Saxon will be shown (for instance the Fr. Canadian landlord of the house and his treatment of the Electrician boss, as told to me). But, beneath the skin of canned foods, radio, the primitive state of this society will be brought out. One can quote the story of Champlain, and the six Frenchmen who disappeared;

“NOUS SOMMES TOUS SAUVAGES”

written upon the hull of the stranded ship, that he had left them to build on the Mississippi.

Next will come a picture of the political structure of the mushroom city of Toronto. It will be shown how that, too, is in fact extremely primitive, “ill-cooked”, undeveloped. The fearful Indian-like squalor of the poor sections — the 19 million dollars spent on relief in 1940. Against this the tasteless, uncultivated luxury of the mining and other magnates. The infinite remoteness of all this from anything that can be called *civilized*.

If it is true (as Brockington quoted from a French critic) that “America is a

country that has passed from barbarity to decadence without even having known civilization", then it is true of Canada that it is *not even decadent* yet.

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"Ici, monsieur, c'est une barbarie!" said he to the maître d'hotel in the Mac-Alpin in New York, during Prohibition. But what could be said to a Frenchman about a Canadian city?

However here, within this locked-up barbarous little state, in its great gold-town . . .